

NO LONGER DO CARS with the Pontiac nameplate storm around the nation's high-banked ovals with greats like Roberts, Foyt, Weatherly, or Goldsmith behind the wheel. But they did until early 1963, and they set some enviable records on stock circuits as well as drag strips. They were almost unbeatable in most forms of competition.

Pontiac still makes and sells real stormers for the man who demands the utmost performance from his street machine. But most Pontiac models are now made for the family man. Fourteen models are offered in the '64 line-up, with seven in the bread-and-butter Catalina series on 120-inch wheelbases, two on the longer, 123-inch-wheelbase Star

Chief, and four available in the Bonneville series. Pontiac's Grand Prix luxury personal car shares the 120-inch wheelbase with the Catalina.

To give you some idea of just what Pontiac has to offer, we decided to try two different Catalina hardtops. One was strictly cool, with comfort and ease of handling the prime considerations. The other was a fire-breathing, all-out performance machine for the enthusiast who puts just that (*performance*) ahead of everything else.

Either car will handle the normal family of five and its luggage for a cross-country trip, and either's suitable for taking the kids to school or a quick trip to the supermarket. One car was

HOT & COOL PONTIAC CATALINA ROAD TEST

a compromise — the other wasn't. One was adequate in performance — the other was red-hot. Yet both were perfectly functional as daily transportation.

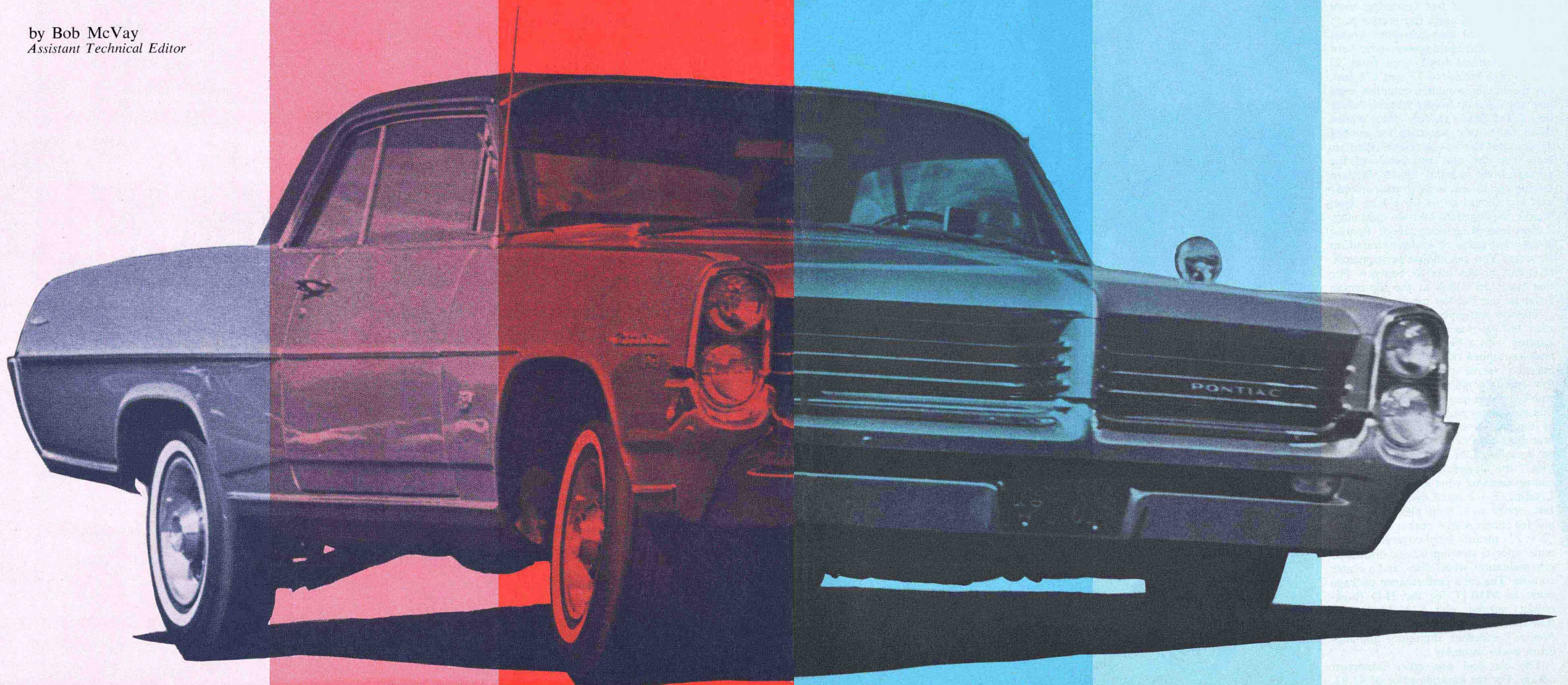
Our first test car, the cool one, was a light blue two-door hardtop with bench seats and room for six. It had power brakes and steering, Hydra-Matic, and air conditioning (plus the other usual extras). Its only performance option was a four-barrel carb that upped the standard 267 hp of its 389-inch V-8 to 303 hp.

Although bench seats don't give nearly so much support as buckets, the standard seats proved comfortable during our 1000 test miles. All four fenders could be seen easily, making close-

quarter work fairly simple, thanks mainly to power steering. Its soft boulevard ride was the sort normally associated with all-coil suspension. In normal driving, the car was comfortable and easy to control. Sharp dips caused the front end to bounce up and down as many as four times before it settled back to level again.

With its standard 2.56-to-1 rear axle, long-range cruising was this Pontiac's forte. Even at our fastest observed speed of 113 mph, the "389" was turning only 4000 rpm and certainly wasn't straining. With enough room, it should hit between 118 and 120 mph. Acceleration was more than adequate for a 4100-pound car with power-robbing ac-

by Bob McVay
Assistant Technical Editor



cessories. It managed zero to 30, 45, and 60 mph in 3.7, 6.5, and 10.0 seconds respectively, turning the quarter in 17.2 seconds and hitting a top speed of 80 mph. The team of Hydra-Matic and the 2.56 rear axle wasn't ideal for top acceleration, since each shift dropped rpm by as much as 2500 according to our electric tach. Fast driving on winding roads again showed this wasn't the ideal combination, because INTERMEDIATE range didn't keep revs up, and LOW was too low for best response on corners in the 35-60-mph speed ranges.

For normal family use, this car is a good choice, but when pushed hard, its soft suspension allowed more body lean than we like. There was pronounced understeer during fast cornering, even with higher-than-usual tire pressures.

The standard cast-iron-drum brakes soon faded into nothingness under hard use. Our normal panic stops from 30 and 60 mph measured 35 and 176 feet, but the brakes wouldn't complete even one stop from an honest 90 mph before they faded almost entirely. Once cooled down, they were adequate for normal driving. But this was the family Pontiac, built with the uses and needs of the normal driver in mind. Under standard driving conditions, it performs perfectly well and should do so for a long time, thanks to Pontiac's built-in durability.

One interesting thing about Pontiac is the wide range of options offered on all series. You can choose performance, economy, or any level in between. For that story, let's look at the top-option Catalina, our hot test car.

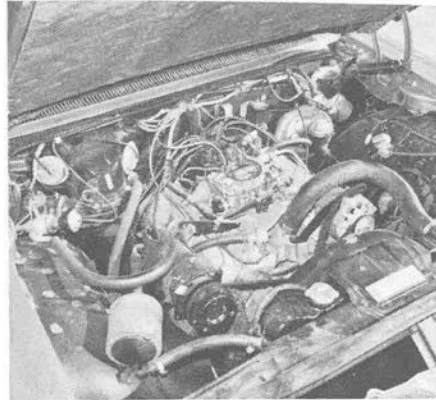
This car was especially set up for our road test. It was a Catalina "2 + 2" hardtop with a big 421-cubic-inch V-8 and was topped off with Tri-Power carburetion (three two-barrels) and the four-speed floorshift transmission. In the true European meaning, a 2 + 2 is a car that puts major emphasis on the comfort of the two front-seat riders, with the rear seats capable of carrying two more on occasion. Like "GTO" and "Grand Prix," the designation doesn't always end up meaning what it says. In this hot Catalina, 2 + 2 equal five, all of whom fare pretty well, with plenty of head- and leg room. A new option (\$290.52), "2 + 2" means vinyl-covered bucket seats, special steering wheel, distinctive ornamentation, wheel discs, and a center console. The car's performance package came to \$410.17 for the H-O (high-output) engine, plus \$231.34 for the four-speed gearbox and \$122.13 for Pontiac's excellent aluminum hub-and-drum brake assembly.

The car had one other important option. For the amazing price of \$3.82, Pontiac offers a heavy-duty suspension package. This consists of springs, shocks,



Cool one comes off line without wheelspin. Mileage ranged from high of 14.2 to low of 7.9 mpg, with overall average at 11.8 mpg. Pontiac has more economical V-8 option.

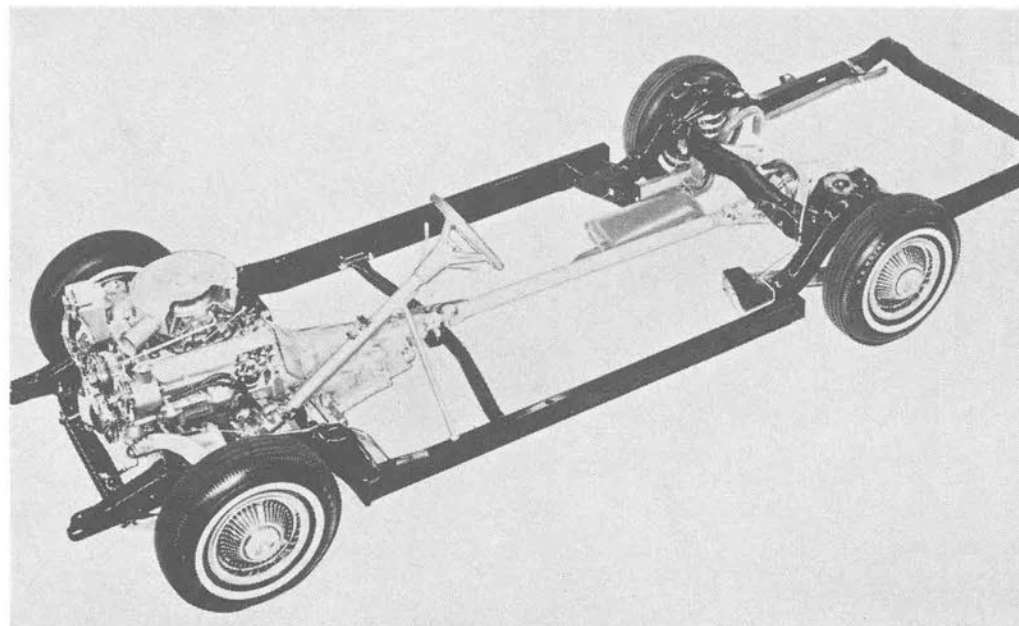
PHOTOS BY BOB D'OLIVO



Cool one's 389-inch V-8 was smooth and powerful, loafed at all but top speeds.



Cool one understeered and scrubbed front tires when pushed hard through fast turns.



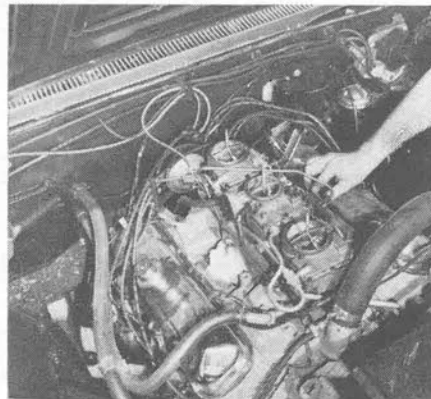
Perimeter-type boxed frame is continued. New composite universal joints with tapered needle bearings give vibration-less propeller shaft operation to full-sized Pontiacs.



After 1300 miles, most of them fast, the 2 + 2 averaged 10.9 mpg, with a high of 12.8 and a low of 7.1 mpg. Traction was hot car's biggest problem during acceleration runs.



H-D suspension gave 2 + 2 near neutral steering, even at top cornering speeds.



Three Rochesters and 421 big inches mean go, although car was docile in traffic.



Brake option gives Catalina strong stopping power time after time — in a nice, straight line, with little nose dive. This was big improvement over standard-drum Catalina.

and a thicker front anti-roll bar. The package changes a softly sprung car into one that clings to the road, doesn't oscillate on dips, and doesn't lean to an alarming degree in fast corners.

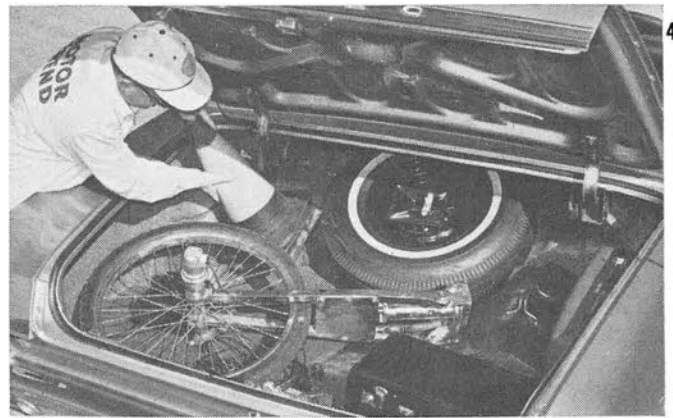
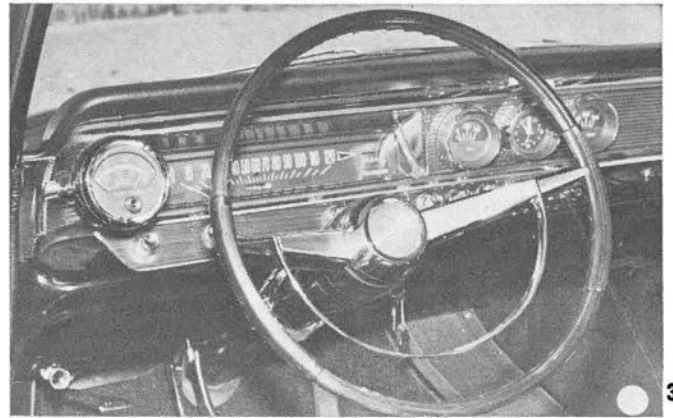
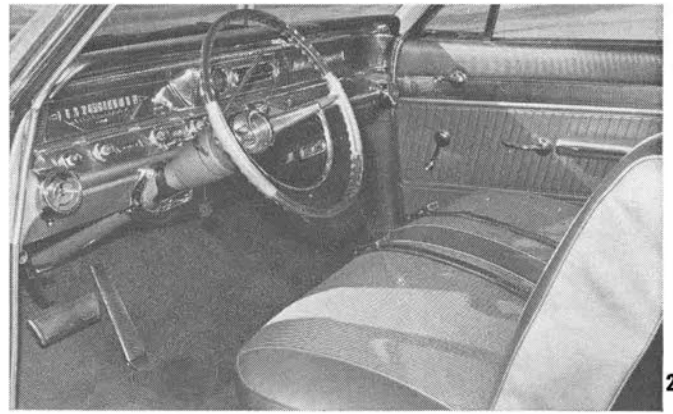
Both test cars start at a base of \$2869. The cool one had a final sticker price of \$4240.05 — the hot one, \$4570.74. The difference was in optional equipment and the car's purpose.

Our hot Catalina had a noticeably stiffer ride, stiffer steering, and stiffer braking than the family version, but it was a lot more controllable and gave us much more confidence when storming winding roads and fast corners. It had a sure-footed, taut feeling and *right-now* response. Fast, hard driving became a pleasure instead of a chore.

Although pedal pressures were much higher than those of the power-braked car, the optional brakes felt and were much stronger. They gave stop after grueling stop from as high as 120 mph without appreciable fade or lock-up and were always powerful and sure during fast mountain driving. Our panic stops from 30 and 60 mph, after much more abuse than we gave the cool car, resulted in distances of 32 and 158 feet — quite an improvement over the standard brakes. We wouldn't want a Pontiac without these fine brakes on it.

Not only does this car handle well and have strong stoppers, it goes like a scalded cat when called upon to really move. During break-in, we felt the tremendous surge of power whenever we cut in the other two carbs for instant passing (only the center one is in use most of the time — until it's opened 60 per cent). We felt only a slight pause, and then the horses came on strong. On Riverside's back straight, we hit 7.5 seconds on our first 0-60 run, then worked our way down to 7.2, 7.0, and finally 6.6 seconds. Thirty and 45 mph came up in 3.1 and 5.2 seconds, due mostly to lots of wheelspin, which got the 4000-pound car underway without bogging down. We clocked 0-70 and -80 mph in 8.6 and 11.4 seconds and blasted through the measured quarter-mile in 15.8 seconds and 93 mph. The hot Catalina climbed right on up to an honest 120 mph before we had to slow down for others using the track at Turn Nine. It hit this 120 long before our cool one came to its top of 113 and, with a longer run, we feel the hot one should easily top 130 mph in stock trim.

The 3.42 rear axle gives a good balance of acceleration and high-speed cruising. The legal California limit of 65 mph required only 3100 rpm in top gear from the big 421-incher, so at any speed below 100 mph, it's just not working very hard. A host of engine, suspension, and rear-end ratios are offered for any of these Pontiacs (see page 49 for a rundown).



PONTIAC CATALINA *continued*

Our main objection, and this pertains to both cars, was the relation of the steering wheel to the pedals and controls. Lowering the wheel would've made the cars much more comfortable, and we'd surely order power steering to reduce the ratio from 5.5 turns (although 4.25 turns is still too many for us). The shift lever on the four-speed is also much too short.

Although the hot one would be our personal choice — its handling, performance, and stopping power make it a safer car to drive fast — testing the hot and cool together gave us a pretty good idea of why Pontiac ranks third in sales. On top of an image of long life and durability, they've established an additional reputation for outstanding performance and luxury. Pontiac now has

most of the reasons people buy cars, these wrapped up in a neat, good-looking package. The price must be right, too — over 600,000 people can't be wrong.

Pontiac pioneered the current trend in bucket seats back in 1957 with one of their special Bonneville convertibles. Eighteen per cent of all American cars had buckets in 1963, and 21 percent is the figure likely for '64. They also introduced the trailer-towing package. Trailer options include a beefed-up frame, H-D springs and shocks, finned drums, and an extra frame crossmember for the hitch. A H-D battery and Delcotron, seven-blade clutch fan and shroud, plus special oil-pressure and temperature gauges are all parts of the trailer-towing and heavy-duty-driving package. Add to that an option list that takes three days to read and you're bound to have one of the hottest makes going. /MT

1) Getting front wheels off ground over wavy road bottomed suspension during fast driving with cool car. Hot one didn't bottom — \$3.82 option made big difference.

2) Standard six-passenger interior has lots of leg-, hip-, and knee room for touring.

3) Two + 2 has special gauges that slant toward driver, walnut trim on wheel and dash. Tachometer position is better than when on console, but wheel obstructs the driver's view. Short shift lever makes all drivers stretch arm for first and third.

4) Trunk was adequate for test equipment plus luggage. Flat floor lets items slide around unless firmly packed. Lip is fairly high. Tail lights are bigger for '64.

CATALINA POWER TEAMS

Cu. Ins.	Carb.	Comp.	Hp/Rpm	Torque	Axle Opts.
Standard engine with synchromesh three-speed					
389	2V	8.6:1	235 @ 4000	386 @ 2000	3.23 3.08
Standard engine with Hydra-Matic					
389	2V	10.5:1	267 @ 4200	410 @ 2400	2.56 3.08
Economy engine with Hydra-Matic					
389	2V	8.6:1	230 @ 4000	386 @ 2000	2.56
Premium-fuel engine with synchromesh three-speed					
389	2V	10.5:1	283 @ 4400	418 @ 2800	3.08 3.23

(Four-speed synchro, same as above except for 3.42 axle)

Four-barrel carb option with H-D synchromesh					
389	4V	10.5:1	306 @ 4800	420 @ 2800	3.08 3.23
Four-barrel carb with Hydra-Matic					
389	4V	10.5:1	303 @ 4600	430 @ 2800	2.56 3.08
Tri-Power option with Hydra-Matic					
389	3 2V	10.75:1	330 @ 4600	430 @ 3200	3.08 3.23 3.42
Tri-Power option on "421"					
421	3 2V	10.5:1	320 @ 4400	455 @ 2800	3.08 3.23
Second Tri-Power option on "421"					
421	3 2V	10.5:1	350 @ 4600	454 @ 3200	3.08 3.23
Third Tri-Power option on "421"					
421	3 2V	10.5:1	370 @ 5200	460 @ 3800	3.42

PONTIAC CATALINA

2 + 2 5-passenger hardtop

OPTIONS ON CAR TESTED: H-O engine with Tri-Power, four-speed manual transmission, aluminum hub/drum brakes, 2 + 2 option, tinted glass, padded vinyl top, H-D springs and shocks, tach, instrument cluster, pushbutton radio, whitewalls

BASIC PRICE: \$2869

PRICE AS TESTED: \$4570.74 (plus tax and license)

ODOMETER READING AT START OF TEST: 121 miles

RECOMMENDED ENGINE RED LINE: 6000 rpm

PERFORMANCE

ACCELERATION (2 aboard)

0-30 mph	3.1 secs.
0-45 mph	5.2
0-60 mph	6.6

Standing-start 1/4-mile, 15.7 secs. and 93 mph

Speeds in gears @ 6000 rpm

1st	55 mph	3rd	94
2nd	75	4th	120 @ 5300 rpm

Speedometer Error on Test Car

Car's speedometer reading	30	47	53	63	74	85
Weston electric speedometer	30	45	50	60	70	80

Observed miles per hour per 1000 rpm in top gear.....22.5 mph

Stopping Distances — from 30 mph, 32 ft.; from 60 mph, 158 ft.

SPECIFICATIONS FROM MANUFACTURER

Engine

Ohv V-8
Bore: 4.09 ins.
Stroke: 4.00 ins.
Displacement: 421 cu. ins.
Compression ratio: 10.75:1
Horsepower: 370 @ 5200 rpm
Torque: 460 lbs.-ft. @ 3800 rpm
Horsepower per cubic inch: 0.88
Carburetion: 3 2-barrel
Ignition: 12-volt coil

Gearbox

4-speed manual, all-synchro, console-mounted lever

Driveshaft

1-piece, open tube

Differential

Hypoid, semi-floating
Standard ratio: 3.42:1

Suspension

Front: Independent ball-joint with rubber-mounted upper and lower control arms, H-D coil springs, tubular shocks, anti-roll bar
Rear: Four-link, pivoted control arms, H-D coil springs, direct-acting tubular shocks

Steering

Manual recirculating ball bearing
Turns lock-to-lock: 5.5
Turning diameter: 42.8 ft.

Wheels and Tires

8-lug steel-disc wheels
8.00 x 14 tubeless rayon whitewall tires

Brakes

Hydraulic, self-adjusting, single-anchor, air-cooled ribbed aluminum drums with bonded alloy cast-iron braking surfaces
Front: 11-in. dia. x 2.5 ins. wide
Rear: 11-in. dia. x 2.0 ins. wide
Effective lining area: 173.7 sq. ins.

Body and Frame

Perimeter boxed frame, welded steel body
Wheelbase: 120 ins.
Track: front, 63 ins.; rear, 64 ins.
Overall length: 213 ins.
Overall width: 79.2 ins.
Curb weight: 4000 lbs.

PONTIAC CATALINA

2-door, 6-passenger sport coupe hardtop

OPTIONS ON CAR TESTED: Air conditioning, power brakes and steering, radio, power antenna, Hydra-Matic, tinted glass, custom steering wheel, retractable safety belts, white sidewall tires

BASIC PRICE: \$2869

PRICE AS TESTED: \$4240.05 (plus tax and license)

ODOMETER READING AT START OF TEST: 500 miles

RECOMMENDED ENGINE RED LINE: 5200 rpm

PERFORMANCE

ACCELERATION (2 aboard)

0-30 mph	3.7 secs.
0-45 mph	6.5
0-60 mph	10.0

Standing-start 1/4-mile, 17.2 secs. and 80.0 mph

Speeds in gear @ automatic shift points

1st	35 @ 4300 rpm	3rd	113 @ 4000 rpm
2nd	82 @ 4400 rpm		(top)

Speedometer Error on Test Car

Car's speedometer reading	31	47	53	64	75	86
Weston electric speedometer	30	45	50	60	70	80

Observed miles per hour per 1000 rpm top gear.....28 mph

Stopping Distances — from 30 mph, 35 ft.; from 60 mph, 176 ft.

SPECIFICATIONS FROM MANUFACTURER

Engine

Ohv V-8
Bore: 4.06 ins.
Stroke: 3.75 ins.
Displacement: 389 cu. ins.
Compression ratio: 10.5:1
Horsepower: 303 @ 4600 rpm
Torque: 430 lbs.-ft. @ 2800 rpm
Horsepower per cubic inch: 0.78
Carburetion: 1 four-barrel
Ignition: 12-volt coil

Gearbox

Hydra-Matic, three-speed automatic, column lever

Driveshaft

1-piece, open tube

Differential

Hypoid, semi-floating
Standard ratio: 2.56:1

Suspension

Front: Independent, ball-joint with rubber-mounted upper and lower control arms, coil springs, direct-acting tubular shocks, anti-roll bar
Rear: Four-link, pivoted control arms, coil springs, direct-acting tubular shocks

Steering

Recirculating ball bearing, coaxial power steering
Turns lock-to-lock: 4.25
Turning diameter: 42.8 ft.

Wheels and Tires

5-lug, steel-disc
8.50 x 14 whitewall, rayon, tubeless

Brakes

Hydraulic, self-adjusting, finned cast-iron drums; integral power assist
Front: 11-in. dia. x 2.5 ins. wide
Rear: 11-in. dia. x 2.0 ins. wide
Effective lining area: 173.7 sq. ins.

Body and Frame

Perimeter boxed frame, welded steel body
Wheelbase: 120 ins.
Track: front, 63 ins.; rear, 64 ins.
Overall length: 213 ins.
Overall width: 79.2 ins.
Curb weight: 4100 lbs.